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Commission on the Status of Women
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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: priority theme: women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development

Participation and partnerships for gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Chair's summary

1. At its 9th meeting, on 17 March 2016, the Commission on the Status of Women held a panel discussion on the priority theme of the sixtieth session of the Commission, "Women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development", with a focus on participation and partnerships for gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Vice-Chair of the Commission, Jun Saito (Japan), moderated the discussion. The panellists were: Olfa Soukri Cherif (Tunisia), Member of Parliament; Angela Brown Burke (Jamaica), Mayor of Kingston; Emma Kaliya (Malawi), Chair of the African Women's Development and Communications Network; Michaela Bergman, Chief Counsellor for Social Issues, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development; and Rima Khalaf, Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia.

2. Participants discussed participation and partnerships for gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda, highlighting efforts by diverse stakeholders and suggesting innovative approaches. They provided examples of interventions and lessons learned during the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and identified partnership and participation opportunities for the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the context of the Agenda. Representatives of 18 Member States and five civil society organizations made statements and posed questions to the panellists.

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Taking stock of existing arrangements for participation and partnerships

3. Participants noted a need for environments conducive to participation by, and partnerships among, stakeholders, including civil society, local and municipal governments, parliamentarians and multilateral development banks. More inclusive policy dialogue and decision-making had amplified the voices of women in development processes, although the rates of women's participation and leadership in both the public and private sectors remained low. In particular, limited financing and shrinking space for civil society organizations were hampering their capacity to complement the public authorities in delivering gender-responsive services.

4. Participants acknowledged that progress had been made in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, especially through strengthened and improved gender-responsiveness with regard to legal and policy frameworks. Further legal and policy reforms were needed to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment and secure women's voice, agency and participation in the 2030 Agenda and ensure that they benefited from it.

Contextual issues

5. Partnerships among stakeholders were found not to be consistently on a level of equality, owing to existing power imbalances. For development to reach the most marginalized and vulnerable in society, including indigenous women and sexual minorities, partnerships should be based on international human rights norms and standards. Adherence to international norms and standards was also important when dealing with the harmful impacts on women and girls associated with some cultural or religious practices.

6. Some participants noted the current limited role and responsibility of the private sector in advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women, while others accorded particular importance to corporate social responsibility measures, including those associated with the United Nations Global Compact, when promoting public-private partnerships. Strong civil society support was seen as important when advocating the commitment of private sector companies to, for example, equal pay for equal work and work of equal value. Participants suggested including gender equality provisions in the legal frameworks for public-private partnerships, similar to environmental and social safeguards already in place, to ensure that such partnerships advanced rather than inhibited gender equality and women's empowerment.

7. Participants suggested that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda should also respond to conflict situations and their gender-specific dimensions. National action plans on women and peace and security could support such implementation. A national goal to end child marriage by 2030 was presented, and work with civil society and other partners was proposed to reach that goal.

8. The discussion included a call for the international community to support the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda in developing countries through debt forgiveness and the lifting of sanctions on countries.

Innovative approaches to participation and multi-stakeholder partnerships

9. Participants called for increased visibility of the merits and achievements of women in leadership positions. They stressed the importance of mentoring women to attain decision-making positions in the public and private sectors. An example was provided of a law to promote women's empowerment in the workplace by ensuring work-life balance and women's participation in decision-making and public procurement. Evidence-based knowledge should be produced to demonstrate how women's empowerment and leadership increased operational effectiveness and was beneficial to society at large.

10. Parliamentary committees and caucuses for gender equality were seen as important vehicles for promoting gender-responsive planning, budgeting and implementation and for strengthening women's political empowerment and leadership.

11. Participants recognized a need to engage men and boys in reducing gender inequality. To that end, the example of a campaign, "Open your eyes", was provided, which involved young men in preventing sexual violence.

12. Advocacy organizations had a key role to play in improving women's representation across economic sectors. Participants noted the importance of working with community and religious leaders to shift perspectives and beliefs about the empowerment of women and girls and their enjoyment of human rights in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

13. Participants noted cultural norms and stereotypes as factors that could confine women to low-wage, low-skilled jobs. To overcome such challenges, examples were provided of outreach at the local level, facilitated by city or local governments in partnership with civil society. Citizens and organizations were successfully collaborating at the local level in providing tailored solutions, highlighting the importance of locally generated activism.

14. Sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics were needed to undertake gender analysis, including in monitoring and reviewing progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and in evaluating national policies and programmes for gender equality and women's empowerment. Participants called for the consistent use of gender-sensitive indicators across the Agenda, and emphasized a need to build the technical and financial capacity of planning ministries and national statistics offices to collect sex-disaggregated data and produce and disseminate gender statistics.

15. Participants called for innovative approaches to collect data for Sustainable Development Goal indicators. They encouraged international, regional and national organizations to explore using big data, crowdsourced data and social media to produce and disseminate statistics, especially on violence against women, unpaid care work and reproductive health.

16. Participants called upon the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women to support the implementation of the outcomes of the Commission and to support Member States in the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda.